

## **SUMMARY OF THE ACCREDITING AUTHORITY COMMITTEE MEETING JUNE 30, 1998**

The Accrediting Authority Committee of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) met on Tuesday, June 30, 1998 at 8:30 a.m. Central Daylight Time (CDT) as part of the Fourth NELAC Annual Meeting in San Antonio, TX. The meeting was led by its chair, Mr. John Anderson of the Illinois EPA Division of Laboratories. A list of action items is given in Attachment A. A list of participants is given in Attachment B.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Mr. Anderson, Chair, welcomed committee members and participants to this committee session. He noted that this chapter had been approved at NELAC III in July, 1997, and that modifications proposed to date by the committee had been distributed in the participants' registration packets. He reported that much of the committee's work since NELAC III had addressed comments received from the Department of Defense at NELAC III and had addressed issues of ISO-compliance in a subcommittee's efforts.

Mr. Anderson also noted that the NELAC Board of Directors recently reviewed their position on time specifications, and have requested that all committees express them in calendar days to ensure consistency in the Standards as well as ease of implementation. He then led the committee through discussion of the materials distributed to participants.

### **SPECIFIC ISSUES**

Participants discussed the use of the terms "assessment", "audit", and "evaluation" in this chapter for equivalent activities. It was agreed that the term "assessment" would be used throughout.

Mr. Anderson noted a concern that wording in section 6.2 (g) "Accrediting authorities ... shall establish one or more technical committees ..." could be burdensome for small states with limited resources. He noted that this proposed wording was included in response to ISO issues. He also noted that the purpose of the technical committees is to provide for consensus decisions appropriate to the needs of individual accrediting authorities, that the composition of such committees may be determined as appropriate to the accrediting authority's needs and may include assessors themselves.

The issue of implementing any State-supplemental requirements has been raised with respect to section 6.2.1 (b), reciprocal accreditation. The committee reiterated that a potential NELAC accrediting authority has only two options: either to change their regulatory/statutory requirements to conform to the NELAC standards, or not participate in NELAC. This is a consequence of developing nationally uniform standards under NELAC.

A specific definition of the term "governmental laboratories" in section 6.2.2(b) was discussed. It was noted that there are fine points to be considered here (e.g., the University of Chicago is a

private institution whereas the University of California is a governmental institution). This was added to the committee's agenda for discussion in the interim prior to NELAC IVi.

Similarly, wording in the chapter will be reviewed for consistency. Specifically, the term "NELAP accreditation" versus "accreditation to the NELAC standards" will be reviewed.

The proposed addition of section 6.3.3.1(n) addresses issues of conflict of interest by making the relationships of assessment and of consulting mutually exclusive. It was noted that this restriction, a common one in ISO contexts, refers to each relationship, not to an organization's mission. For example, when acting as an assessor for laboratory X, an accrediting authority must not also act as a consultant to laboratory X. This assessor relationship would not preclude the same accrediting authority or its contractors from providing consulting service to laboratory Y with whom it did not have an assessor relationship.

In discussion of the proposed changes in Section 6.3.3.1.2, the distinction between (prime) contractors and subcontractors was discussed. It was agreed that the distinction should be removed and that reference should be consistently to "contractor".

It was noted that the purpose of Section 6.5 is to accommodate any necessary rulemaking changes only during start-up (i.e., through July 1, 2000) of NELAP implementation – not to "grandfather" a State's existing program. This is not a general two-year extension following an application; a candidate accrediting authority will be responsible to have the necessary program elements in place at the time of its application.

The question was raised of which revision of the Standards would be used in evaluating the program of a candidate accrediting authority. Several participants agreed that the evaluation should be under the revision adopted at the time of application, however this has not been specifically addressed. Mr. Anderson said he would refer this issue to the Transition Committee for their consideration.

Section 6.9.1, discussing the NELAP assessment team, was the subject of extended discussion. The committee noted that the proposed wording is essentially a clarification of previous discussions rather than a change in intent. It was clear that the NELAP assessment team's credibility was considered by all participants as a pivotal issue for the viability of the NELAC/NELAP program, since the credibility and consistency of assessments will correspondingly determine the value of the program to participating States. In response to voiced criticisms, Ms. Jeanne Mourrain, NELAP Director, described components of the current NELAP program, an initial candidate accrediting authority's program review, and the direction the NELAP program is moving to ensure appropriate assessment quality.

Based on this discussion, it was suggested to add a subsection 6.9.1(d) stipulating that at least one assessor team member must have completed the NELAP Accrediting Authority Assessor Training Course. Ms. Caroline Madding suggested that the proposed wording be submitted to the upcoming voting session, and that this issue be made an action item for further discussion by the committee; this was accepted by the committee. It was noted that the NELAP Assessor

Training course is scheduled to be given September 2, 1998, in Washington, DC as part of the USEPA's 1998 Summer Training Conference on Quality Assurance .

## **SUMMARY**

Based on the preceding discussion, the committee agreed to present for vote the materials distributed to participants, plus consistent use of the term "contractor" and the addition of Section 6.9.1(d).

There being no further available time for discussion and since all necessary committee business had been completed, Mr. Anderson declared the committee meeting adjourned.

**ACTION ITEMS  
ACCREDITING AUTHORITY COMMITTEE MEETING  
JUNE 30, 1998**

<b>Item No.</b>	<b>Action Item</b>	<b>Date To Be Completed</b>
1.	Use the term “assessment” consistently throughout this chapter.	7/1/98
2.	Define “governmental laboratory”	Prior to NELAC IVi
3.	Make consistent usage “accreditation to the NELAC standard” rather than “NELAP accreditation”	Prior to NELAC IVi
4.	Propose consistent use “contractor”, removing “subcontractor”	7/1/98
5.	Mr. Anderson will request the Transition Committee to address the issue of which revision of the NELAC Standards will be used in evaluating a candidate accrediting authority’s application.	7/1/98
6.	Review requirements for NELAP assessment team qualifications (Section 6.9.1)	Prior to NELAC IVi

**PARTICIPANTS  
ACCREDITING AUTHORITY COMMITTEE MEETING  
JUNE 30, 1998**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>Phone Numbers</b>
Mr. John Anderson, Chair	Illinois EPA Division of Laboratories	T: 217-782-6455 F: 217-524-0944 E: jpanderson@epa.state.il.us
Mr. Roger C. Bucholz (absent)	Red Hawk Laboratory, Inc	T: 703-684-4468 F: 703-548-9946 E: 500hawk@500hawk.com
Ms. Maude Bullock	Department of the Navy	T: 703-602-1738 F: 703-602-5547 E: bullockm@n4.opnav.navy.mil
Mr. William Cusick	California Department of Food and Agriculture	T: 916-262-1434 F: 916-262-1572 E: wcusick@smtp1.cdffa.ca.gov
Mr. John Farrell III	Analytical Excellence, Inc.	T: 407-331-5040 F: 407-331-4026 E: aex@ix.netcom.com
Mr. Jefferson Flowers	Flowers Chemical Laboratories, Inc.	T: 407-339-5984 F: 407-260-6110 E: jeff@flowerslabs.com
Ms. Caroline Madding	USEPA/Office of Water	T: 513-569-7402 F: 513-569-7191 E: madding.caroline@epamail.epa.gov
Mr. James Meyer	North Carolina Department of Environmental Health and Natural Resources	T: 919-733-3908 F: 919-733-6241 E: james_meyer@wqlab.enr.nc.us
Ms. Aurora Shields	Kansas Department of Health and Environment	T: 785-296-6198 F: 785-296-1641 E: laportela@aol.com
Mr. Robert Wyeth	RECRA Environmental, Inc	T: 716-691-2600 F: 716-691-2617 E: labnet@recra.com
Dr. Gene Tatsch (Contractor Support)	Research Triangle Institute	T: 919-541-6930 F: 919-541-7386 E: cet@rti.org